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RONALD U. DUNLAVEY

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROSPECTS

ANNCR: VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY DISCUSSES THE OUTLOOK FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST:

VOICE: EXACTLY NINE YEARS AGO --- ON NOVEMBER TWENTY-SECOND, NINETEEN SIXTY-SEVEN---THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ADOPTED ONE OF THE MOST MOMENTOUS RESOLUTIONS IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD ORGANIZATION. YET THAT RESOLUTION WAS NEVER ACTED UPON, AND STILL REMAINS AS A SYMBOL OF UNFULFILLED ASPIRATIONS FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

THE RESOLUTION WAS NUMBER TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY-TWO. IT WAS PASSED FIVE AND A HALF MONTHS AFTER THE THIRD ARAB-ISRAELI WAR, AND ITS PURPOSE WAS TO OPEN THE WAY TO A FINAL, OVERALL SETTLEMENT OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE. IT CALLED FOR WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAELI FORCES FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORY, FOR AN END TO BELLIGERENCY, FOR RECOGNITION OF THE INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF ALL MIDDLE EAST STATES, AND FOR "A JUST SETTLEMENT OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEM." BUT WRANGLING OVER THE EXACT MEANING OF THOSE TERMS HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR NINE YEARS, AND THE RESOLUTION HAS NEVER BEEN CARRIED OUT. NEVERTHELESS, IT REMAINS---BY GENERAL CONSENSUS --- THE BEST AVAILABLE FORMULA FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

NOW HOWEVER, THERE IS SOME CAUTIOUS HOPE THAT THE INTENT OF RESOLUTION TWO FORTY-TWO MAY AT LAST HAVE A CHANCE OF BEING REALIZED. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THE COMING YEAR MAY WITNESS A RENEWAL OF NEGOTIATIONS; IN FACT, THE VIEW HAS BEEN EXPRESSED SEVERAL TIMES BY HIGH OFFICIALS HERE IN WASHINGTON THAT THE CLIMATE FOR NEGOTIATIONS IS BETTER NOW THAN IT HAS BEEN AT ANY TIME SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ISRAEL IN NINETEEN FORTY-EIGHT. THE END OF THE LEBANESE

CIVIL WAR IS SEEN AS A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT, AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF EGYPTIAN-SYRIAN RELATIONS AS WELL. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT A SENSE OF REALISM IS TENDING TO PREVAIL, INCLUDING PRESS REPORTS OF POSSIBLE MODIFICATIONS IN THE POLICIES OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION. IT IS ALSO BEING REPORTED THAT SYRIA AND ISRAEL HAVE QUIETLY NOTIFIED THE UNITED NATIONS THAT THEY AGREE TO AN EXTENSION OF THE MANDATE OF THE U.N. OBSERVER FORCE ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS. IN THE PAST, SYRIA HAS AGREED TO THIS RENEWAL --- ON SOME OCCASIONS--- ONLY AT THE LAST MINUTE AND AFTER PERSONAL APPEALS FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL. FINALLY, IT IS NOT WITHOUT SIGNIFICANCE THAT BOTH THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION ARE AGREED ON THE DESIRABILITY OF REASSEMBLING THE GENEVA MIDEAST PEACE CONFERENCE -- PREFERABLY, IN WASHINGTON'S VIEW, WITH A PREPARATORY CONFERENCE TO INSURE SUCCESS.

THE HISTORY OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS FROM NINETEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO NINETEEN SEVENTY-THREE CONSTITUTE AN UNFORTUNATE DIPLOMATIC LANDSCAPE, LITTERED WITH THE BONES OF WELL-MEANING PROPOSALS. ONLY AFTER THE NINETEEN SEVENTY-THREE WAR DID NEGOTIATIONS ASSUME REAL MOMENTUM, WITH A SERIES OF LIMITED AGREEMENTS BETWEEN EGYPT, SYRIA AND ISRAEL. WITH THE COMING OF THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR, THIS MOMENTUM WAS LOST. NOW THERE IS A CHANCE TO RECOVER IT --- AND A CHANCE, ONE MAY HOPE, THAT THE NEXT ANNIVERSARY OF RESOLUTION TWO HUNDRED FORTY-TWO WILL FIND IT CONSIDERABLY CLOSER TO ACHIEVING ITS AIM OF A PERMANENT PEACE SETTLEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

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